

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL MILAN

TO AMEMBASSY ROME

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TAGS: PFOR, IT

SUBJECT: JUNE 15 ELECTIONS: A FIRE BELL IN THE NIGHT

1. THREE DAYS AFTER THE FIRST RETURNS OF THE JUNE 15 ELECTIONS BECAME KNOWN, THE DUST IS ONLY SLOWLY SETTLING ALONG THE MILAN-VENICE AXIS. THERE IS LESS UNCERTAINTY, AMONG ITALIAN OBSERVERS, HOWEVER, ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED, WHY, WHAT IT MEANS AND HOW TO COPE WITH IT THAN ABOUT THE WILLINGNESS AND ABILITY OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTIES TO DO WHAT IS NECESSARY TO AVOID A LOOMING INSTITUTIONAL CRISIS WITH FAR REACHING INTERNATIONAL IMPLICATIONS.

2. WHAT HAPPENED

THE DETAILS OF THE RESULTS HAVE NOT YET BEEN REDUCED TO MANAGEABLE EQUATIONS FOR THE HUNDREDS OF SMALLER CITIES AND TOWNS. BUT ENOUGH IS CLEAR ABOUT THE TOTAL FIGURES ALREADY REPORTED BY EMBASSY ROME AND ABOUT EACH OF THE 15 PROVINCIAL CAPITALS IN THIS DISTRICT IN WHICH ELECTIONS WERE HELD TO SEE THE EXTENT OF THE CHANGE.

3. THE DC LOST GROUND SLIGHTLY 12 OF THE 15. THE COMMUNISTS GAINED SHARPLY IN EACH OF THE 15 AS

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DID THE SOCIALISTS BY A MUCH SMALLER AMOUNT. THE

SOCIAL DEMOCRATS LOST CONSIDERABLY AND THE LIBERALS DROPPED DRASTICALLY WHILE THE REPUBLICANS GAINED ALMOST EVERYWHERE. ALL OF THESE TRENDS WERE APPROXIMATELY FORESEEN AS WERE THE MAGNITUDES EXCEPT FOR THE COMMUNISTS. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE NEO FASCISTS GAINED RATHER THAN LOST AND OFTEN SHARPLY.

4. IT IS NOT ONLY THE STARTLING RISE IN THE COMMUNIST VOTE, FORESEEN LITERALLY BY NO ONE, INCLUDING THE PUBLISHED POLLS AND APPARENTLY THE COMMUNIST LEADERS THEMSELVES, THAT HAS CREATED THE SHOCK HERE. IT IS ALSO THE REALIZATION THAT THE ARITHMETIC OF THE RESULTS AT THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL IMMEDIATELY FACES THE NATIONAL PARTIES WITH REAL AND FUNDAMENTAL POLITICAL CHOICES.

5. BEFORE THE ELECTIONS, FOR EXAMPLE, COMMUNIST-SOCIALIST GOVERNMENTS EXISTED AND WERE POSSIBLE IN ONLY TWO OF THE 15 PROVINCIAL CAPITALS VOTING IN THIS CONSULAR DISTRICT - MANTUA AND PARMA. NOW THAT OPTION IS OPEN TO THE COMMUNISTS AND SOCIALISTS IN SIX OF THE 15: MANTUA, PARMA, PIACENZA, AND CREMONA AS WELL AS THE TWO BELLWEATHER CITIES - VENICE AND (WITH A COUPLE OF EXTREME LEFT VOTES) MILAN AS WELL. A SOMEWHAT SIMILAR CHANGE IS ALSO BELIEVED TO HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN THE SMALLER COMMUNITIES BUT THE DATA IS NOT YET AVAILABLE TO EXAMINE.

6. THIS CHANGE IS IMPORTANT NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF ITS PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT BUT ALSO BECAUSE IT FACES THE COMMUNISTS AND SOCIALISTS WITH THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEM AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL OF WHETHER OR NOT TO PICK UP THIS OPTION TO RULE.

7. WHY

THERE IS SURPRISING AGREEMENT ABOUT WHY THE COMMUNISTS GAINED SO SHARPLY AND IT BOILS DOWN PRIMARILY TO THE ISSUE OF BAD GOVERNMENT. (REFERRED TO IN ROME'S 8678 LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND MILAN'S 1018) THE LONG SIMMERING PUBLIC FRUSTRATION WITH INADEQUATE PUBLIC SERVICES, OIL AND MAFIA SCANDALS SWEEPED UNDER THE RUG, INEQUITABLE TAXATION, LETHARGIC BUREAUCRACY, GOVERNMENT CORRUPTION, THE LACK OF CANDOR BY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, INADEQUATE PUBLIC EDUCATION, INADEQUATE PUBLIC HOUSING AND THE ROUTINE APPOINTMENT TO JOBS BY POLITICAL ALLEGIANCE RATHER THAN MERIT HAS SIMPLY COME TO A

BOIL. TO THIS, AND RELATED TO IT, HAS BEEN THE ITALIAN RECESSION COMBINED WITH DOUBLE DIGIT INFLATION CAUSING BOTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND A CUT IN REAL WAGES FOR LARGE PARTS OF THE WORKING CLASS. AND FINALLY, THE INABILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT TO GOVERN: TO IMPLEMENT LEGISLATION, MAKE DECISIONS, AND PROVIDE THE PUBLIC FRAMEWORK IN WHICH THE POPULACE CAN LEAD A NORMAL EXISTANCE.

8. THE SWING TO THE COMMUNISTS, AND TO A LESSER DEGREE TO THE SOCIALISTS, IS TAKEN AS A PROTEST VOTE ON DOMESTIC ISSUES NOT A JUDGEMENT ON ITALY'S ROLE IN THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE NOR A SUDDEN CONVERSION TO COMMUNIST IDEOLOGY. IT IS ALSO A RESULT OF DIMINISHED FEAR OF ITALIAN COMMUNISM AND THE GAINS OF THE PSI ARE SEEN AS HAVING BEEN LIMITED BY ITS ROLE IN THE MAL-GOVERNO CHIEFLY BLAMED ON THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS.

9. WHAT IT MEANS

THIS IS TAKEN HERE AS A THIRD ALARM TO THE DEMOCRATIC PARTIES TO MEND THEIR WAYS OR RISK BEING PUSHED ASIDE BY THE COMMUNIST LEFT. LOCAL OBSERVERS RECALL THE REFERENDUM ON DIVORCE AND THE ELECTIONS IN TRENTINO- ALTO ADIGE, AMONG OTHERS IN 1974 AS HAVING PROVIDED EARLIER CLEAR WARNING OF PUBLIC REJECTION OF CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY PERFORMANCE. NOW ANOTHER SHARPER, CLEARER WARNING HAS BEEN SOUNDED. IF VOTER DISCONTENT WITH THE NON-COMMUNIST PARTIES IS NOT ABATED, A LARGE PART, IF NOT ALL OF THE PRESENT SHIFT TO THE COMMUNISTS AND SOCIALISTS, WILL LATER BE TRANSLATED INTO PARLIAMENTARY SEATS WITH ALL THAT MEANS FOR A COMMUNIST ROLE IN NATIONAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GOVERNMENT.

10. COUPLED WITH THIS ALARM FOR THE FUTURE, THERE IS A GENERALLY STATED BELIEF THAT THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND SOCIALISTS CAN STILL STOP THE LOSSES AND REGAIN SOME OF THSES LOST VOTES TO MAINTAIN PRO-WESTERN DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT IF THEY ACT DECISIVELY AND AT ONCE TO REMEDY THE CAUSES FOR PUBLIC DISCONTENT. WHEN PRESSED, OUR INTERLOCUTORS INSIST, WITH WHAT SEEMS TO ME MORE HOPE THAN CONFIDENCE, THAT GENUINE FEAR OF THEHABYSS WILL LEAD TO THE NECESSARY CHANGES.

11. THESE ARE, OF COURSE, INITIAL REACTIONS THAT MAY BE MODIFIED AS OPTIONS ARE EXPLORED AND THOUGHT

THROUGH. BUT THEY ARE SHARED BY SUCH DIVERSE OBSERVERS
AS GIANNI AGNELLI, WHO SPOKE IN MILAN YESTERDAY, THE
EDITOR OF THE CORRIERE DELLA SERA, AND GIORGIO GALLI
THE WELL-KNOWN LEFT-WING BUT ANTI-COMMUNIST POLITICAL
SCIENTIST, AMONG OTHERS. IN ANY EVENT, THEY ARE
THE TERMS OF THE POLITICAL DEBATE AND A MEASURE OF THE DEEP
CONCERN ABOUT THE FUTURE THAT WE HEAR IN MILAN TODAY.FINA

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